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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ, DECEMBER 15, 2003

1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" on 12/13 entitled "Reward". "The distribution of the lucrative Iraq reconstruction contracts, as were decided by Washington, to be allocated only to those countries that sent soldiers to fight Saddam Hussein has reopened the wounds caused by the war. Moreover, this decision came at a time when a U.S. emissary was sent to Europe to obtain a reduction of the Iraqi debt."

"The decision to give the large booty of 18 billion dollars in contracts was justified by President Bush by saying that "the war was mostly financed by the money of the U.S. contributors and the sacrifice of the coalition soldiers and for that reason they deserve priority".

"The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, asked Washington to reverse its decision about the contracts. Nevertheless, President Bush has been emphatic, repeating that, "the costs in dollars reflect the fact that the American soldiers and other soldiers risked their lives in Iraq".

"More than 60 countries will be eligible to compete for the contracts. and although it was not specifically mentioned by the Pentagon, we suppose that Honduras is also eligible."

"The old saying "work for what you want" says it well. This is our opportunity. If we couldn't send any unemployed Hondurans to work in Iraq, now whoever wants to participate in the bidding process for Iraqi reconstruction contracts has to wait in line just as those Hondurans did in the hopes of going to Iraq for work."

Palmer